

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Joseph R. Garcia, Jr.

The son of Spanish immigrant parents, Joseph R. Garcia, Jr. was born in 1915 in the town of Keāhua, Maui.

He graduated from Lahainaluna High School, and in 1935 he went to the University of California at Davis (at that time called University of California College of Agriculture at Davis). Two years later he returned to Hawai'i and worked for the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association experiment station as an agriculturalist in training. After completing his training in two years, he was employed by Pioneer Mill Company.

In 1942 he moved to the Big Island and worked as an agriculturalist for the Pepe'ekeo Sugar Company (formerly called Hakalau Plantation Company). He then became the industrial relations superintendent for the company.

His early political life was strongly influenced by Republican council member Toshio Ansai, for whom he worked in 1940. He served in the territorial house, 1949 to 1955 and 1959; and the state house, 1959 to 1974. He was elected to the Hawaii County Council in 1976 and served for four years. He retired in 1980.

Tape No. 17-56-1-88

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Joseph R. Garcia, Jr. (JG)

May 25, 1988

Hilo, Hawai'i

BY: Chris Conybeare (CC) and Daniel W. Tuttle, Jr. (DT)

Joy Chong: The following is an interview with Joseph Garcia. It took place on May 25, 1988 at the Garcia residence in Hilo. The interviewers were Chris Conybeare and Dan Tuttle.

DT: It's May 25th, we're continuing our series of oral history videotapings with people who've been involved in Hawai'i politics and we're speaking with Mr. Joseph Garcia. Maybe we can start the way we have with all of these. If you could tell us a little bit about your very early beginnings, where you were born, when, and something about your parents' circumstances, so we get an idea of kind of your roots.

JG: Well, I was born on the island of Maui, on June 26, 1915 in a little town called Keahua, which no longer is in existence. I was born to Mr. and Mrs. Jose Ruiz Garcia, both who migrated from [Punta de Tarifa] Spain to Hawai'i with the last Spanish immigration in 1913. Both of my parents came here to work in Hawai'i(s) sugarcane fields, but to Dad's credit, Mom never worked in (any) cane field one day in her life. She was always a housewife, notwithstanding the fact that my father was hired for one dollar a day.

DT: That took a lot of doing, didn't it?

JG: It certainly did. But to the everlasting credit of both of my parents, who have long left us, we had a lot of love in our home, and a lot of food to eat. We didn't have money, but we had a lot of love and a good home life.

DT: And so you have very kindly feelings toward it, I gather.

JG: Well, when I lost my parents, I lost the finest people on the face of the earth.

DT: You were talking about why your parents left Spain. You mind repeating that just a little bit?

JG: Well, Mom and Dad were very, very strong believers in education. Both were educated at home, in Spain. They both read and wrote Spanish rather fluently. But they felt, from what they had heard about Hawai'i, that Hawai'i was the place where you could give your children a good education, and that prompted [them] to leave Spain for Hawai'i.

DT: Were there older children, older than you, or did they have any children when they left?

- JG: They had one child, my eldest sister, Josephine. She was a year old. She died on board ship en route from Spain to Hawai'i and was buried at sea. The rest of us (were) born in Hawai'i.
- DT: It was a long journey in those days, wasn't it?
- JG: Very long. I think it took them ninety days to get here.
- DT: Ninety days. So, they really found what they wanted. They fell in love with Hawai'i, did they, apparently?
- JG: They apparently did, because many of the Spaniards, in fact, the majority of the Spaniards who migrated to Hawai'i, after accumulating enough money to move to California, they did. My parents were too poor to have the necessary boat fare so we stayed in Hawai'i.
- DT: Because they had to or because they liked Hawai'i, now?
- JG: Well, my mother was very insistent on remaining here. My father was quite the adventurer. Had it been up to Dad, he would have flown the coop and moved to California. But Mom felt that we had very strong roots in Hawai'i, and she persuaded him to remain here in Hawai'i.
- DT: So you went to grammar school, before you knew it, I guess.
- JG: Well, I went to a grammar school at Lahaina, a Catholic school for four years, and because of our financial status, we were given, I believe (chuckles) a grant by somebody that was rather generous. My sister, eldest sister, and I both went to the Sacred Heart School in Lahaina for four years. Then we went to a little town called Pu'ukoli'i which was situated way above where the hotels in Lahaina presently exist at Kā'anapali. It was the, I think, the largest plantation community in the entire territory of Hawai'i. We had our own (plantation) store, our own grammar school, we had barbershops, we had restaurants, and a beautiful theater. I graduated from Pu'ukoli'i School at the eighth grade, then I went to Lahainaluna High School and graduated from Lahainaluna.
- DT: Now, that was sort of a work-study situation for you, wasn't it? You had work to do and studying to do?
- JG: Well, I became a Future Farmer of America, and I raised hogs. I had seven, six nanny goats, and one billy dairy of our own. We had goat milk, my mother made goat cheese. I also raised hogs, had a vegetable garden. In the old days, everybody worked. No one was exempt from working. And we youngsters were taught that hard work was never a disgrace, that hard work was dignified work if you did it honestly. And that's the way [we] were brought up.
- DT: In your school days, did you ever get involved in politics? Did you have any early beginnings of your political career back then? Run for class offices or something like that?
- JG: I was elected class president of the freshman class. I was also elected president of the Future Farmers of America chapter at Lahainaluna for three years, but surprisingly enough, I ran for vice-president of the student body association. I lost to a young Filipino boy by the name of Anastacio Luis. Lahainaluna, as you well know has, still has a boarding department and day scholars. I think, (chuckles) the boarders ganged up on me, and I finished second to Anastacio. But he was a good man. That was my first political defeat.

DT: Well, we have to learn to take your defeats along with the victories, don't you?

JG: Well, it was a lot of fun trying.

DT: So you really did get your early beginning in politics. Did you pay any attention to what was happening in the territory at that time, politically?

JG: No, I didn't. No, I didn't. I really didn't keep up too much with that, except when my father decided to become an American citizen. This was in 1933. Dad spoke with a very pronounced Spanish accent, and he decided he wanted to be an American citizen. Then he studied the Constitution of the United States and American history, and he passed his exams. I think, I don't [say] this as a slam against the department of public education, but I'd say that my father knew American history better than most of the kids who graduate high school today. I say that without any fear (of) being contradicted because my dad knew his history and his Constitution. And I think I was most impressed with the way my father felt when—before Judge [Daniel H.] Case—he was asked, “Now that you have answered all of the questions correctly to my satisfaction, tell me in one single sentence why it is that you want to become an American citizen.”

And my dad, in his very pronounced Spanish accent said, “I want to become an American citizen not so much because I love my native land of Spain any less, but because I have come to love America even more.” And that, I think, will be taken with me to my grave. I will never forget those words.

DT: Very nice way to express it. The Great Depression was going on in those days, wasn't it, about the time he became a citizen?

JG: Yes. As a matter of fact, I made a trip to Washington, D.C. in 1933 to represent the territory of Hawai'i at a Future Farmers [of America] convention held in Washington, D.C. President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt had just been elected president of the United States. In fact, he had just been sworn in as president of the United States, and Lincoln McCandless was then the delegate to Congress from the territory of Hawai'i. And I took two copies of the yearbook of Lahainaluna, 1931, because that was the centennial celebration of our high school, (and) Lahainaluna is known as the oldest school west of the Rockies. One copy was for President Roosevelt, and one copy was for Lincoln McCandless. And I was given the privilege of presenting the copy to President Roosevelt at the White House, through the courtesy, of course, and accompaniment of Lincoln McCandless.

DT: He didn't sign you up to be a Democrat, though? (Chuckles)

JG: No. I must confess, however, that, as you probably well know, many offers were made while I was in public office, to become a Democrat. And I always felt it was very difficult to change a man's feelings just by changing his coat. I was a Republican and was going to die a Republican.

DT: Is this because of your parents or . . .

JG: My father (had) a great deal of influence in my political career. He always told me, “If you choose a party, choose a good one. I don't care whether you're a Democrat or Republican, but whatever party you belong to, be a good party member.”

And then on the island of Maui, particularly in Lahaina, there lived a man called Antonio Furtado, (whose) son Richard Furtado was an outstanding athlete at the University of Hawai'i in track, football, and other sports. And Mr. [Antonio] Furtado was a very, very strong Democrat. In fact, I think at one time, he was known, perhaps, as the only Democrat in Lahaina. I went to his home for dinner one night, and he gave me a very good bit of advice. I was then already a member of the [territorial] house of representatives, having been elected in 1948 for my first term in public office. He told me, "I'd like to see you be a Democrat. But if you're going to be a Republican, be a good Republican."

DT: Very interesting. So even by the time you're eighteen, then, you had some feelings that you were a Republican?

JG: Really not necessarily so. It came more in 1940 when I first worked for Toshi [Toshio] Ansai.

DT: Oh, I see.

JG: Toshi Ansai ran for the council—at that time, the board of supervisors for the county of Maui—and I decided to assist him in Lahaina. And that was my first plunge, actually, into the political arena. [Toshio Ansai: Maui County Board of Supervisors (1934–42, 1960–62); territorial senate (1948–56); state senate (1962–66).]

DT: You had gone back to school, however, after high school, you'd gone to California, to . . .

JG: I went to Davis.

DT: . . . Davis, I believe, sometime in the [19]30s, I guess.

JG: I went to Davis (in 1935, and) I took the two-year course. Davis was, at that time, known as the University of California College of Agriculture at Davis. Now, it's known as University of California at Davis. When I went there, we had something in the neighborhood of 700 students. As a consequence, I was able to make my reserve letter in football and my varsity letter in track. Today, I couldn't even carry the water bucket for the football players there. They're so huge. Holy mackerel, they're very huge people.

After my two years, I came back to Hawai'i and worked for the HSPA [Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association] experiment station as an agriculturalist in training. And at the end of my two years, I was employed by Pioneer Mill [Company] at Lahaina, my original hometown (and the) original company for which I worked. And then in September 1942, I moved to the Big Island and worked as an agriculturalist for the then Hakalau Plantation Company. Later on, (I became) its industrial relations superintendent.

DT: So you became a Republican on Maui and then moved to the Big Island after that.

JG: Yes.

DT: And you sort of credit Toshi Ansai for being your godfather in the [second] part?

JG: Well, I found Toshi to be an outstanding individual, a man in whom I had a great deal of pride because I liked the things for which he stood. I liked the way he articulated the issues.

He didn't beat around the bush, and I thought, "My goodness gracious. That's what a Republican is. That's what I want to be."

DT: He was certainly a gentleman.

JG: Absolutely, all the way through. They don't come any better.

CC: Did you get involved in Republican politics when you moved over here right away? I know it wasn't until '48 when you went to a Republican convention, but . . .

JG: No. I went to my first Republican party convention during the summer of 1948. And I was asked by the late [Gavien] Bush to nominate him. And this was held at the old Civic Auditorium on King Street. I was asked to make a speech for him [Bush], nominating him for a delegate to the national Republican party convention. And I guess, because I possessed a loud voice, I must have, perhaps, influenced a few of the Republican leaders on this island to ask me to run. I had just gotten married, and I didn't see myself as any kind of a politician, and I turned them down repeatedly until finally, I consented to run for the office of [Territorial] House of Representatives. Of course, I was misled also. I was told that my nomination was secure because there were four to be nominated, and they didn't think there would be more than three or four Republicans running [in the primary] anyway. Then I suddenly found myself with seven Republicans running for four seats, and I wished I hadn't run. To be very candid with you, I would liked to have dropped out of the race at that time.

I must also confess, though, before we go any further, that in 1932, I went to an oratorical contest in Honolulu. (Telephone rings.) A contest which was won by—why don't you just turn off.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

JG: Well, anyway, in 1932, I won the Maui championship. This was an oratorical contest sponsored by the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. It was entitled the "Constitutional Oratorical Contest." I represented Maui. I guess I won the championship on Maui because I was an athlete, and I think three of the judges were sportsmen. And I possessed a very loud voice. But then, I spoke English with a very—not that I speak it any better today, but I spoke English with a very pronounced plantation accent, like saying "dose" and "dem" and "dat" and "wen" and "weyah." And when I got through speaking, the crowd began to laugh. I knew then that the crowd was not laughing with me, but that the crowd was laughing at me. By the way, the winner at that time, was Sam [Samuel] P. King, who was [later] a [circuit court] judge. And he subsequently won a trip to Europe after that, so you can imagine what kind of competition I was in.

But the late Wallace Rider Farrington, who was former governor of the territory of Hawai'i [1921–25], and at that time, was the publisher of the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* took me to his Pacific Heights home the next day and gave me a chewing out like I never had in my life. He said my English was absolutely atrocious. And he said, "I know that you're doing very well with the Future Farmers of America organization, but if you expect to get anywhere in life, your English has to improve." And that's when I began trying "this, that, those, them, where, why."

DT: So you sort of engaged in a self-improvement course, then all on your own?

JG: On my own, yes, I had to.

DT: Mm hmm.

JG: It was a very, very frustrating experience for me. I must confess that when I returned to the hotel after the oratorical contest, I cried because I knew the crowd had laughed at me and not with me. And I had nobody else to blame but myself.

DT: Well, you both had a sense of victory and also a sense of defeat, but out of that, why, became a better Joe Garcia, huh?

JG: Well, I don't know if better or not, but believe me, I worked hard at it.

CC: Did you find you enjoyed the oratorical part of running for office? Did you . . .

JG: Well, prior to running for office, I wrote a column here in Hawai'i [for the *Hilo Tribune-Herald*] called "Hukilepo Joe Sez." I wrote in good and pidgin English. And I did this for about five years. The weekly column consisted of not less than 500 words. And then they later on gave me two square inches on a daily basis. And nobody knew who Hukilepo Joe was. Hukilepo meant "Farmer Joe," or "Pull-the-soil Joe." That's the title that I chose. But then when I decided to run for politics, I let them know who Hukilepo Joe was. And that, I think, played a very important part in my being elected because I used to tell a few pidgin English stories during a rally. And you must know that in those days, we had no TV, radio was a very expensive commodity, but the rallies were very, very well attended.

CC: There were entertainment as well as . . .

JG: Absolutely, absolutely. And as a consequence, I had a little following that always wanted to hear whether I tell the same story twice or have another story, whatever. And that helped me. I must confess rather candidly that telling pidgin English stories did help me.

CC: Do you remember [any] of those stories?

JG: Oh, I'm not going to say any of them. No, no.

CC: Why not?

JG: No, no, no. But I used to enjoy doing that, and I still use pidgin English stories when I emcee programs. For instance, at one time, here, nobody could emcee the fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration of an elderly Japanese couple except a Japanese master of ceremonies. Yet I've emceed a couple, not more than, well, about three of them already. And each time (I was) asked by the bride and groom, "Please don't use good English but speak in Japanese pidgin so the people can understand you." The same with the Filipinos. They asked me to do the same thing. "Don't speak in very good English because otherwise the elderly Filipinos can't understand you." So we got along, the mixture of good English (and) pidgin English. We had a good time.

DT: We're going to give you a chance to think about one of those stories.

JG: No, no, no, no, no.

DT: After changing tape, maybe we can talk you into it. Okay.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: This is a continuation of the Joseph Garcia interview. This is videotape number two.

DT: Okay. While we've been off the air here, so to speak, we twisted your arm a little bit to see if you couldn't come up with one of the stories you used to tell at the rallies.

JG: Let me see if I can think of one later on. (Chuckles)

CC: Well, we'll just keep talking, maybe you'll think of one while we're doing it.

DT: Now when you think about the old party rallies [they] were really very fun, weren't they?

JG: (Yes), well, let me . . .

DT: It's sort of a focal point of the entire community, it was a chance for the entire community to come together.

JG: Exactly. It was like a social event. Everybody came out. Well, for instance, one of the things I remember the most was (when) I was speaking at the Pāpa'ikou gym. And when I got through, I tried to be like Abraham Lincoln. I said, "I want you folks to know that everything I have, I owe to my mother for she has done so much for me." Somebody from the rafter yelled, "Eh, Joe Garcia. Why you no give your mother thirty-five cents and go home?" (DT chuckles.) Well I tell you, (chuckles) that left me in the lurch.

And then we went to Keaukaha, as an example. We got to Keaukaha, and some Hawaiian kids had a boy tied against a tree, and they were playing Indian with him. So just before we went into the gym to have our rally, this Hawaiian woman asked the little kid, "Kimo, why you guys stay do to him, to Keoki?" That's "George" in English.

Kimo says, "Oh, we going scalp the guy."

She says, "Why you guys no scalp Joe Garcia?"

And the little guy says, "Joe Garcia, scalp him for what? Da buggah get the scalp but no more da hair."

(Laughter)

JG: This, I took from kids. But I enjoyed, I enjoyed the rallies. Pi'ihonua, for instance, drew a tremendous crowd at every rally, tremendous crowd. And that was both for the Republicans as well as the Democrats. And of course, when I ran in 1948, the Republican party was then in power, as you well know. And we controlled the legislature until the election of 1954. And during my first three elections, I served as chairman of (several) important committees (such as) labor and industrial relations my first year [1949 session], public lands [1953 session], and then the committee on agriculture[, forestry and manufacturing, 1951 session]. The fourth election, the Democrats came into power in 1954, and we were relegated to (an) office of a little election booth on the outside, with one half secretary. That was [Charles E.] Kauhane's

[speaker of the house] punishment to us for the punishment he had received, when he was in the minority.

DT: You stepped into a kind of delicate situation, now. Things were rather tight in the house in the '49 session, and [Hiram] Fong got to be speaker, right?

JG: That was no problem.

DT: But it was almost a tie in the . . .

JG: It was very, very close, but the '50—oh, no. Fong ran away [i.e., won unanimously] in the 1949 [session]. It was the ('53) [session], when the first coalition came out.

DT: I see, uh huh. So you were something of a veteran by the time you got to the . . .

JG: Well, not exactly a veteran, but you had to decide whether you were going to go with Fong or with [E.] Percy Lydgate. [Lydgate challenged Fong for speaker in 1953.] And I took a very firm position. I said that I was for Representative Fong all the way, provided he stayed within the Republican party. If he bolted, I would have to vote for Percy Lydgate. I did just that.

DT: So ultimately, you joined the winning side then?

JG: Well, no, Fong won. Even though I voted for Lydgate, I . . .

DT: Oh, you voted for Lydgate?

JG: (Yes).

DT: I see, I see.

JG: But to the everlasting credit of that great man, Hiram Fong, he treated me very, very well, despite the fact that I stuck by my guns and voted for Percy Lydgate.

DT: I see, mm hmm.

JG: I was gun-shy of coalitions, I'll be very candid with you. I felt that the majority of the party had the right to elect their speaker. That's the way I felt.

CC: So it was more a matter of principle for you?

JG: That's all that it was. I liked Hiram Fong—I still have a great deal of admiration for Hiram. I think he's one of the greatest politicians that Hawai'i's ever turned out. There's no getting away from it. He knew his politics inside (and) out. He's been a credit not only to us here in Hawai'i, but to the entire nation (during) his tenure as a United States senator.

CC: Did you see the 1954 turnaround coming, or could you read the cards?

JG: Oh, I think the 1953 session, when we started taking things away from the government employees that had been given them previously was the impetus that forced the Republicans

out of power. Not only that, the Democrats were able to attract brilliant young men. Dan [Daniel K.] Inouye, Sparky [Spark M.] Matsunaga, Tom [Thomas P.] Gill, and (George Ariyoshi were elected to the house of representatives). They made a great deal of difference. So the Republicans found themselves in the minority for the first time in the 1955 session. I survived the election by the skin of my teeth, but then, I lost my first political fight in 1956. I was defeated in '56. Then I ran in 1958 for the territorial legislature. I was elected. Then, I ran for the first state legislature in 1959. From '58 until I retired in '74, I never lost another race.

DT: You lived through a coalition again, didn't you, in '59?

JG: Oh, yes, indeed.

DT: Remember '59? Do you remember anything about that?

JG: Well, we had eighteen Republicans and there were nine Democrats that did not want to see the late [O.] Vincent Esposito remain as speaker of the house. [Esposito was speaker, 1957-59.] And negotiations between Vince Esposito and the Republican party leadership died. We, the Republicans were asking for the right to name (our) own committee members, [we] were asking for proportionate representation. And Esposito rejected all of that. There were several other Republicans, whose names I will not mention, who went along with me in saying that we did not want a coalition. But then I called speaker-to-be Esposito on the phone and asked him to just give us proportionate representation, and the right to name our own committee members. He refused. I turned around and I said I would join the coalition, and the others followed me. Even if three or four of us had said no, we did not want the coalition, it would have not gone through.

DT: And you didn't have enough to constitute a majority?

JG: No. But then, of course, all kinds of predictions (were made). We had the late Thurston, Paul Thurston, is that from the [*Honolulu Advertiser*, Paul Thurston telling that we had doomed . . .

DT: Lorrin [P.] Thurston. [Thurston was publisher of the *Honolulu Advertiser*, 1931-61, and chair of the Hawai'i Statehood Commission, 1955-59.]

JG: Lorrin Thurston, [saying] that we had doomed statehood for Hawai'i by our actions. We had [J.] Akuhead Pupule [Hal Lewis] taking off on us every day of the week on his weekly program saying what a bunch of damn fools we were, that we had hurt statehood's chances. My goodness gracious, within three months, we had statehood.

DT: And that sort of presented a new ball game, so the coalition sort of disappeared, then?

JG: That's right. The coalition disappeared, then came the 1959 state elections. That was the first time that the house of representatives had a four-year tenure. Members of the [state] house went from 1959 to 1962, same with the senate because we had to then convert from a territorial status to a state status. And I was very fortunate enough to be the minority leader of the house at that time. And of course, we had a Republican governor, Governor [William F.] Quinn; as a matter of fact, the only Republican governor we've been able to elect since statehood. The senate was also controlled by the Republicans for the first time, and the last

time. Since 1959, we've never been able to control anything. Neither the governorship nor the house, nor the senate.

CC: Did you find the minority role frustrating, or what did you . . .

JG: Well, about in 1959, we had eighteen [nineteen Republican] members in the house. At that time, we were quite powerful because we could sustain any veto that the governor might have came up with because, as you know, it takes two-thirds in both the house and the senate. The Republicans in the house could sustain his veto. Also two-thirds were required to pass any measures dealing with finances, and if one Republican voted no, the measure would not pass. So we had leverage. And that leverage allowed us to get secretaries, and we were very, very fortunate. Of course, Elmer Cravalho was our choice for speaker in the 1959 coalition. We wanted Elmer Cravalho as the speaker, and that's the position he got. And as you well know, Elmer was one tough gentleman as the speaker.

DT: He held on.

JG: He was fair, he was square, but he was tough. Make no mistake about that.

DT: You always seem to enjoy it, though, even though you were in a minority, and seemingly taking raps from all sides, you always seemed to enjoy politics and enjoy the people around you.

JG: I like working with people, I guess, perhaps from the time that I was a little fellow, I enjoyed being with people. I enjoyed my tenure as minority leader. Make no mistake. I enjoyed that. But I think, more importantly still, what I enjoyed about being in politics was the fact that (I) thought at least, (I was) contributing (toward) making Hawai'i a better place in which to work and live, than when (I) came into it. My father always told me that, try to make Hawai'i a little bit better than you're enjoying right now. He said because we have worked hard to give you what little you have, perhaps you can do a heck of a lot more for those who are going to follow, for your children and those who are going to follow them. And I felt my dad spoke very prophetic words. And that's one of the greatest satisfactions I've ever had. Well, driving to Hilo, seeing the libraries, seeing the University of Hawai'i-Hilo campus. It started with us, and seeing it grow to what it is today, I mean, those give you great senses of satisfaction.

DT: All the while you were active in the Republican party because you really stuck with your belief in the Republican party, didn't you?

JG: I stayed with the Republican party despite many opportunities to have become a Democrat, (if) I so desired.

DT: And you became chairman of the convention, I think, in '56, did you not?

JG: Yes, I was the chairman of the Republican party convention. I have, since then, not accepted any more assignments because I felt that a job like that should be passed around to individuals who need the exposure. I've also been the convention chairman on this island for the past three years, and then I refused to do it again, because I think they ought to give it to some young politician who needs the exposure, who's going to be running. Let him get the recognition. People like us don't need it, Dan.

- DT: The only thing is, they haven't come up with many people who (chuckles) are able to fill in and get the recognition that you want them to have.
- JG: Well, if you have the knowledge of parliamentary procedure, if you understand what the issues are at the convention, before the convention gets underway, being a chairman is not that difficult. But if you go in there not knowing your parliamentary procedures, some wise alec can turn you topsy-turvy. You've got to be firm, and you've—there's one strong parliamentary procedure point you can always use, and that is appealing the ruling of the chair. No matter what mistake you make in parliamentary procedure, you could always say, "Would you like to move to appeal the ruling of the chair?" And then you explain the appeal in such a way that you hope they will vote with you. And once your position is sustained and the appeal denied, you're riding high. But I think the Republican party can find individuals to be good convention chairmen. I know Hannibal Tavares, (but) I think (he) has given it up.
- DT: I was going to say, you gave it over to Hannibal. He's not bashful about accepting it these days.
- JG: Well, I think he's beginning to feel that somebody else should have it.
- DT: I'm not sure how well this worked for the Republican party, but it's seemingly characteristic of the party. I know [D.] Hebden Porteus used to say the same things about why he didn't want to become active in the Republican party. But meanwhile, the party has sort of suffered from this lack of the people who are in the legislature actively letting their names be used and participating.
- JG: Well, the Republican party began suffering, I think, when it was tagged with the reputation of being the rich man's party. Nothing is further from the truth than that. I don't care how they slice it. Take a good look and see who drives the best cars in town, Democrats or Republicans, for instance? Let's face realities.
- DT: You're talking about present day, not twenty years ago.
- JG: Even twenty years ago. Twenty years ago, they talked about big business being the influencing factor. I was an employee of C. Brewer and in politics, and to the credit of C. Brewer and Company, not once was I told how to vote. Not once. And I say this with a clear conscience, not once was I told how to vote. Now, somebody else (might have been) influenced by their employers, I don't know, but in my case, none. The three presidents under whom I served always told me, "You use your own judgment, that's why the people have elected you. If we don't like what you've done, you will hear from us. But you vote your conscience." And that's what you've got to do whether it hurts somebody or not, because as a legislator, you can't please everybody.
- DT: Of course, your critics would say that you didn't have to be told, you see.
- JG: Oh, of course, of course. That's fundamental. But the Republican party also began to fade when it could not attract young people from various ethnic backgrounds. And this is still the big problem facing the Republican party today. Go to a Republican party convention, for heaven's sakes, (and) where are the young people? Where are the ethnic groups that should be turning out? Like now, I understand that Maui would be having the Democrat convention this weekend. They talk in terms of 800 delegates attending. I went to the Kaua'i Republican party

convention last year. I don't think we had 350 on the floor of the convention. And by the time the last dog was hung, half of the place was empty.

DT: So it remains to be seen what will happen this year, you're saying.

JG: Absolutely. We keep on talking about the old days, oh this is the year the Republican party will shine. I'm saying, where are the candidates? How many offices did we give up uncontested? Political year in and political year out.

DT: You going to the convention this year?

JG: Oh, I'm not too sure. It all depends, if my wife [Ivy Elaine Toledo] would like to go with me. Otherwise, I won't.

DT: You probably would have a good time over there with them.

(Laughter)

DT: I'm sure you would.

CC: Help them have a good time.

DT: You stayed in the legislature for a long time. One of the longer tenures.

JG: Twenty-four years. When I retired, I was the dean of the legislature.

DT: Twenty-four years. And you did this, not because you were defeated, but because I guess, the reapportionment occurred?

JG: The reapportionment, I still could have won, but by 1968, I was already too inclined to retire from politics. I was just feeling that I had enough. I wanted to try to be, at least, a homebody because every time that I went to Honolulu, I left wife and children back home. And it got to a point where, sheesh, I wanted to be with my family. So from 1968 on, I was thinking of giving it up. I could have run in 1974 again, but then I felt it was a good time to get out.

DT: You never considered running for higher office, something like lieutenant governor or governor?

JG: No. Those were some of the little prizes that were put in front of my nose if I had decided to become a Democrat.

DT: Oh. The Republicans never drafted you then? (Chuckles) Only the Democrats.

JG: No, no, no. In fact, I would not have accepted any of those positions. Statewide positions, I would not have accepted them. I would have had to alter my style of campaigning. I ran very low-budget campaigns. I did not have to worry about fund-raisers, notwithstanding the fact that certain unions never endorsed me once in my political career. The people of my community always sent me back.

CC: But you did, when you came back, jump into, at least started to, maybe, jump into the

mayor's race here [in 1976], but you . . .

JG: (Yes), that . . .

CC: . . . then you got out. What happened?

JG: Well, I think that question should be better posed to those who encouraged me to run and then had the temerity to ask me to pull out because they wanted to give another candidate [Wing Kong Chong] another chance at the mayorship. And then I had suffered a heart attack in '75 that almost put me under. And this was in 1976 that I was going to run. I began getting phone calls at home telling me, "You better get out of the race because you have a heart attack, you might die in office, and why don't you give this man a chance?" Party unity, so I felt, hey, look. When I made my announcement that I was going to pull out, I left a lot of my friends in the lurch because support was there, had I wanted to try. My wife was still a little bitter about what happened to me. But those who encouraged me first to seek the mayorship, then asked me to reconsider, trying to give this man one more chance, and then they said, "Well, if you would run for the council, we will help you." As you know, in 1976, the individual who ran for mayor, lost [to Herbert Matayoshi]. And in 1976, I was elected to the Hawai'i County Council.

CC: So you tried your hand at county politics for a few years.

JG: (Yes), we had two Republicans on the council and seven Democrats, and yet, we turned things around a little bit. I think you folks know that there was a coalition that was formed and two Republicans lined up with the other five Democrat dissidents, and we elected our chairman [Harvey S. Tajiri]. I was elected the vice-chairman. Later on, we changed chairman [Stephen Yamashiro], and I still survived [as] vice-chairman. So as a Republican, I served for four years as the vice-chairman of the Hawai'i County Council.

DT: Very interesting.

CC: We'll stop here while we change tapes, and we'll maybe do one more. . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: The following is videotape number three of the Joe Garcia interview. And this is also the last tape of the interview.

DT: All righty. Let's pick up—you indicate that you really enjoyed sort of getting back to politics through the county council. Any other things you'd like to talk about in those four years that you served?

JG: Well, I think the accomplishments of the county council were pretty good at that time. I think that the two Republicans, Jim Dahlberg and myself, played our roles respectively in the affairs of the county of Hawai'i. And I think when I left office, we left the county of Hawai'i in little better shape than it was when we went in. And that's about the greatest

accomplishment I can think of, having been a councilman for four years.

DT: You have been tempted to run for higher office. I think you've mentioned that people have been urging you to run for mayor or governor or something of that sort?

JG: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, every time that we go shopping, (Ivy) is tired of people saying, "Why don't you run for mayor, why don't you run for this, why don't you run for that." And I keep saying the answer is no. I've never been tempted. If I had been tempted, I would have already filed my nomination papers.

DT: So you really hung 'em up for good in 1980, then, I guess.

JG: I felt that I had done the best thing for both myself and for my family, and I'm very, very happy that I did. I spent more time at home, but as my wife says, it's about time that I retired permanently where I can really be a homebody.

DT: But nonetheless, you've retained your zest and interest in politics, I think, haven't you?

JG: Well, I belong to Pacific Housing Assistance Corporation. It's a very small, non-profit, low-cost housing corporation in Honolulu. Every year since 1984, I've been helping with the (silver) legislature on this island which is composed of senior citizens from throughout the island, where we divide them in a two-and-a-half day conference. Half to the house, half to the senate. We go through the same procedures they do in the legislature, passing bills back and forth. I guide them through the parliamentary procedure from the first introduction of a bill on the first reading, (until) it passes third and final reading if necessary. I teach them how to go into conference committee meetings, tell them about the importance of the chairman, how powerful the chairman of a committee is.

And then during the legislative session, I take groups of four to Honolulu for two nights and three days. I introduce them to the speaker of the house, president of the senate, the lieutenant governor, see that they meet the chairman of the finance committee, chairman of the senate ways and means committee, chairman of the judiciary committee on both sides, and we advocate for the bills that the senior citizens want. At the end of the legislature, I ask them to choose the three most important bills that they think should go before the legislature with respect to senior citizens on this island. We don't lobby, Mr. Tuttle.

DT: You don't lobby?

JG: No, we advocate.

DT: Oh, I see. (Chuckles)

JG: We are not paid lobbyists. We just go up there and we ask to give those measures consideration.

DT: So you don't have to register as lobbyists or anything of that sort?

JG: No, no. The least number we have met on any one trip has been twenty-eight in two-and-a-half days. The most, thirty-six. And I make sure that they get introduced from the house and (senate) galleries while they're there. And then on the last day, I take them for a tour of the

capitol from the bottom to the top. Legislative Reference Bureau, printing, committees, caucus rooms, etcetera.

- DT: They must really appreciate all your know-hows from all the many years in the legislature.
- JG: Well, I think one of the Big Island representatives put it this way to the group I was with last: “We don’t know how much you are paying Joe Garcia for what he’s doing, but whatever it is, it’s not enough.” I donate my services. All I take with me to Honolulu is the same per diem that is given to anyone who accompanies me. And sometimes, the per diem does not suffice, you know, for the hotel room. And if you don’t eat, you might not spend very much from your own pocket. But I enjoy doing it, I think I’m doing these people a service by having them understand the process of legislation, what they have to do to see to it that a bill passes from first reading up to the time that it gets to the governor’s office.
- DT: Now, I bet they vote when it comes election time.
- JG: Absolutely. Absolutely. And the enthusiasm they display is absolutely amazing.
- DT: Well, that’s a nice thing to be doing, certainly since you’ve retired. Now, if I can ask you to reflect very seriously upon—the Republican party has been having great difficulties in recent years, this is one of the things I’d like to have you reflect upon. What do you see as the future for the Republican party? Are you optimistic or pessimistic?
- JG: I am pessimistic to this extent. Unless the Republican party can begin to attract young people of various ethnic backgrounds, unless the Republican party can make certain that no seat is left unopposed, the Republican party is going to be in trouble. All you have to do is check back on previous elections. And my goodness, when you see the number of seats they give up without any opposition, it’s staggering, to say the least. I am optimistic in that someday, I expect to see a revival of Republicanism in Hawai‘i because I think people are beginning to realize that you’re going to have to, sooner or later, do for the people what they cannot do for themselves, rather than constantly give, give, give. And I think the taxpayers themselves may someday revolt if this situation continues.
- DT: Well, the future will have a habit of taking care of itself, I suppose, and appreciate your reaction. What about some names that I might mention, for example, Jack [John A.] Burns. What’s your reaction to him? He’s in the opposite party, I know, but . . .
- JG: I liked Jack Burns. Jack and I—Jack was a Catholic, as I (am). We met many times at Holy Communion. And as one of the Democrats on this island once told me, “Joe you spend more time at Washington Place than most of the Democrats.” But I was minority leader, I was minority floor leader, I worked very closely with Jack. I found that it was better to discuss rather than to fight. And I found that we could do things and resolve our differences over a cup of coffee, just as we could on the floor of the house of representatives.
- DT: Yet at one time, he was pictured as a communist by Republican, other Republicans, shall we say?
- JG: Well, he may have been pictured as a communist, who proved it?
- DT: I guess that answers that question. (Chuckles) What about Bill [William F.] Quinn?

- JG: Bill Quinn was an excellent governor. I enjoyed working under Bill Quinn. He was young, he was refreshing, he had good ideas, and he was one man who, each time that he appeared before the legislature on opening day, or rather gave his state of the state message, received tremendous applause. He was interrupted by applause many, many times. Something you very seldomly see with the new governors.
- DT: Yeah, why is that? I'm curious. This raises an excellent point that in recent years, for example, under the Democrats, as opposed to, say, Governor Quinn, they are less inclined to applaud in public, interrupt the state of the state message. Have you ever figured that out?
- JG: Either they're missing what the governor is saying or the governor does not emphasize the strong points strongly enough. Governor Quinn was, as you know, an excellent orator. He reminded me of Ronald Reagan. And that Quinn was able to use the proper inflection, and reflection—pronunciation and enunciation. When he wanted [to] enunciate a situation, and that, I think, was what brought the applause to him. He did it very beautifully.
- DT: You think the Democrats haven't been as strong in this point?
- JG: I don't think so. I don't think so.
- DT: Yeah, I'm almost beginning to think it was a cultural difference between parties that you don't get any interruption.
- JG: No, I don't know. You might be right.
- DT: The Democrats riding high and yet no applause.
- JG: I don't understand it. I used to be chagrined. Poor Governor Burns would get up there and give a good speech, and hardly anybody applauded.
- DT: Interesting.
- JG: I found this rather difficult to understand.
- DT: What about [D.G.] Andy Anderson?
- JG: Well, (chuckles) I don't know what went wrong. I don't know whether he took wrong advice in the way he conducted his campaigns or what happened, but I think the biggest mistake was for Andy, when he and Frank Fasi decided to both run against George Ariyoshi [for governor] in the general [in 1982]. Frank Fasi as an independent and Andy Anderson on the Republican ticket. Now, I don't care how you slice the watermelon, the two of them could not survive when you knew that George had all the endorsements in the state of Hawai'i. That was impossible. I think if Andy had met George Ariyoshi at that time, man to man, one on one, or either Frank Fasi had met him one on one, the result might have been different. And I think when Andy made his return trip against [John] Waihee the last time, (there) wasn't that too wide a gap between the winner and the loser. But the inability of Andy Anderson to capture the neighbor islands turned him in.
- DT: The neighbor island lieutenant governor candidate might have helped, do you think, or did the people feel that [John Henry] Felix was not the candidate for this office?

- JG: Well, I don't know whether Felix could have made—or anybody else could have made a difference. What I think is that, traditionally, the neighbor islands have gone Democrat.
- DT: So it might not have made any difference.
- JG: So, I don't think it would have made any difference.
- CC: Some have felt Mr. Anderson, in the last weeks of the campaign didn't really show the heart that maybe—I don't know if you have observed any of that.
- JG: No, I couldn't comment on that because I know that he was very enthusiastically received when he came to this island to campaign. I attended one of his meetings in Hilo, (actually) two of his meetings in Hilo, and they were very, very well received. The same as in Kona. I went to the one he had in Kona. What happened on O'ahu, Kaua'i or Maui, I do not know. But a Republican candidate who runs statewide has to have support (of) Maui, Lāna'i, Moloka'i, Kaua'i and the Big Island. If you don't, *aloha no*.
- DT: Makes it difficult, that's for certain.
- JG: Absolutely, absolutely.
- DT: Well, now, maybe the \$64,000 question. What about the future of Hawai'i, how do you view that? Economy and socially and general outlook.
- JG: Well, economically, sugar's in trouble. There's no getting away from that. I would like to see everything done humanly possible to keep sugar a viable industry in Hawai'i. But when you see macadamia nut trees supplanting sugar on very good cane lands, you begin to wonder. I think that as long as we can have strong price supports, sugar will exist. But for how long, I do not know. I'm very much afraid for the economy of Hawai'i to the extent where we're becoming a service economy. And the more expensive hotels we build, the more expensive the meals they serve, I'm just wondering how much longer the tourists are going to be willing [to pay] the kinds of prices that are being charged. The hotels scream about, the hotel owners screamed about the 4-percent tax, room tax [i.e., transient accommodations tax], but yet, take a look at the percentages with which they raise their rates. Sometimes you think it's unconscionable, and I think that someday, down the line, they're going to have to start taking a good look as to what kind of clientele will be coming to Hawai'i. I worry about that because, with a service economy, in the event of a repression or depression, the service economy will be the first to suffer. And that scares me. We need basic industries.
- DT: Any follow-up questions, Chris?
- CC: No, I think it's good.
- DT: I guess we've about reached the end of the road. We thank you.
- JG: Well, I want to thank you folks very much.
- DT: Appreciate your giving us the time.

END OF INTERVIEW

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